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THIS PAPER EXAMINES THE CAREER OF MUJIHADEEN COMMANDER AHMAD SHAH MASSOUD AND WHETHER HE WOULD HAVE BEEN A SUITABLE NATIONAL LEADER FOR THE PRESENT DAY AFGHANISTAN. THE PAPER ANALYZES MASSOUD AS A MILITARY COMMANDER, DESCRIBES HIS CONTENTIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN, OTHER FACTIONS AND THE TALIBAN, AND PRESENTS SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. FORCES CONDUCTING OPERATIONS WITHIN THE REGION.

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Executive Summary

Title: Ahmad Shah Massoud: A Case Study in Leading Modern Afghanistan.

Author: LtCol J.M. Pollock

Thesis: Ahmad Shah Massoud would have emerged as an undisputed military and political leader had it not been for his difficulties with Pakistan and the troubles he faced consolidating support among the recalcitrant tribes and ethnic/factional leaders of Afghanistan.

Discussions: Massouod was perhaps the finest Mujihadeen Commander to fight against the Soviets in the Afghan insurgency. He was the only Mujihadeen military commander who grasped the operational level of war unlike other commanders who operated primarily at the tactical level. Massoud, an ethnic Tajik, operated primarily from his stronghold in the Panjsher valley. He was an outstanding operational planner, military organizer and civil administrator who patterned his guerilla concepts primarily on Mao.

Pakistan was the primary supporter of the Mujihadeen in the Afghan insurgency. Massoud as an ethnic Tajik was never fully trusted by Pakistan because of his independent nationalist spirit and ethnic background. Pakistan's diplomatic and military initiatives in Afghanistan were designed to ensure Pakistan's regional security. Pakistan aligned itself with the Afghan Pushtun ethnic majority and used this ethnic group as its enabler to reach those objectives. Massoud, because of his previously mentioned ethnic background and unwillingness to act as a Pakistani surrogate, was marginalized by Pakistan during the insurgency.

Massoud's ethnic background and Afghan societal structure also doomed Massoud as a national leader. After the insurgency against the Soviets, the Jihad became a power struggle amongst the various factions based on ethnic lines. This power struggle caused thousands of casualties in inter-Mujihadeen combat. As the Defense Minister of the interim government, Massoud's inability to stop the factional violence in Kabul, wrest control of the outlying areas from the warlords, and provide basic services to the people, brought great disillusionment with Massoud amongst the civilian population. His inability to build long-term alliances with the various factions ultimately doomed him to failure and brought about the rise of the Taliban.

Conclusions: Massoud was probably the best candidate for national leadership of any of the factional leaders. The fact that he was unsuccessful in forging a nation from the disparate ethnic factions should be cause for concern. Afghanistan's contentious ethnic factions and ambitious warlords may make it ungovernable under traditional western democratic concepts. A loose confederation of ethnically based states, governed under tribal law may be the best solution to Afghanistan's political problems.

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INTRODUCTION

On Sunday 9 September, two days before the terrorist attack on the United States, a former insurgency commander against the Soviets in Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Massoud, was mortally wounded in a terrorist attack. Massoud had become a key leader of the Northern Alliance, a coalition of divergent military factions attempting to assert themselves politically in Afghanistan as a counterpoise to the Taliban. The two attackers posing as Algerian journalists had just finished touring provinces under Northern Alliance control and had even interviewed the exiled Prime Minister Burhannudin Rabbani. The attackers had waited several days for an interview with Massoud and detonated a bomb built into the VCR they were carrying. Both terrorists were killed in the attack. Massoud and his aide Assen Suhail were killed and the Northern Alliance Ambassador to India, Massoud Khalili wounded.[1]

Massoud was perceived by many military analysts to be the most formidable adversary to a variety of governments and organizations within the region. He was strongly opposed to Pakistani interference in Afghan affairs, and had spoken out forcefully against terrorist organizations and their danger to the future of Afghanistan. While Massoud was renowned as a resourceful guerrilla commander, a superb organizer, and charismatic and dynamic leader, could he lead a nation as ethnically diverse and politically Byzantine as Afghanistan?

This paper will argue that Ahmad Shah Massoud would have emerged as an undisputed military and political leader had it not been for his difficulties

[1] Molly Moore. "Bombing Injures Afghan Rebel Leader". *Washington Post*. 11 September 2001. 16.

with Pakistan and the troubles he faced in consolidating support among the recalcitrant tribes and ethnic/factional leaders of Afghanistan. This essay will develop this argument by tracing Massoud's rise as a military commander (Chapter One); discussing the nature of the conflict between Massoud and Pakistan (Chapter Two); examining Massoud's political military relationship with other Afghan leaders and tribes (Chapter Three); and analyzing the conflict between Massoud and the Taliban/Al Queda (Chapter Four). Chapter Five will provide some conclusions and recommendations for U.S. forces conducting military operations in an insurgency environment in which there are contending tribes and ethnic factions.

CHAPTER ONE

MASSOUD AS MILITARY COMMANDER

Massoud led the predominantly Tajik and Hazeras based Jamiat-I-Islami faction of the resistance in the Panjsher valley during the entire Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. This chapter will analyze Massoud as a military commander, describing his military and administrative organizational abilities, and his execution of operations at the operational level of war. By undertaking this examination, the reader will have a clearer understanding of why Massoud was such a viable candidate for national leadership.

Massoud was born in 1953 in the Panjsher valley, the third of six children to an Afghan army colonel. Following high school, he studied engineering at Kabul Polytechnic for a year. After the coup against King Zahir Shah in July 1973, which was sponsored by the King's cousin Muhammed Daoud, Massoud fled to Pakistan. While there, he was trained by the Pakistani Intelligence Service (ISI) in sabotage/guerilla warfare in an attempt to overthrow the newly formed Afghan communist government. During his time in exile, Massoud studied Che Guevera, Mao, Debray, and U.S. Special Forces doctrine, but upon closer examination, Mao's influence is especially evident in the way Massoud evolved as a warfighter and military commander.[2]

Pakistan sent Massoud and his fellow members of the Sunni Islamist Movement back into Afghanistan in 1975 in an attempt to overthrow the Daoud government. The Sunnis were organized within a loose framework known as the Young Muslims Organization. It was an organization consisting of mainly

young urban intellectuals. They considered Islam as much a political movement as a religion and strongly opposed both the exiled king and the Daoud government.[3] Massoud's participation in the rebellion, however, was short lived. He briefly captured a government office in the Panjsher, which government forces quickly reclaimed. Following this reversal of fortune, he then immediately fled back into Pakistan, where he received more guerilla training.[4]

In the spring of 1978, Nur Mohammed Taraki overthrew the Daoud government with the combined support of both the Khalq (The People) and Parcham (Flag) wings of the communist party and established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.[5] That fall, the Khalqs eliminated their Parcham rivals and initiated a series of sweeping reforms against illiteracy, women's dowries, and land reform. These initiatives struck at the basis of traditional Afghan society and sparked an insurgency combining rural peasants and fundamentalist Muslims. The newly initiated insurgency was rapidly taken over by young educated Islamists, such as Massoud, who based their ideology on the writings of modern Islamic militants.[6]

At the same time, the Soviet Union became alarmed by the ascension of the ruthless Hafizullah Amin to Prime Minister. His rapid rise to power coupled with the assassination of President Taraki by Amin's bodyguards and concerns over the rural insurgency, further distressed the Soviets. Subsequently, the

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[2] Sandy Gall., *Behind Russian lines: An Afghan Journal.* (New York: St Martins Press, 1990), 155.
[3] Oliver Roy,. *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War.* (London :International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991), 56.
[4] Barnett R. Rubin., *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan.* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1995), 27.
[5] Roy, 12.
[6] Roy, pg 12.

Soviet's resorted to direct action under the pretext of a 1978 Mutual Assistance Treaty in order to establish a more moderate communist government.[7]

During this period, Massoud reentered Afghanistan, establishing a headquarters in the Panjsher valley where he planned for, and organized his forces for insurgency operations. Massoud's operations were based around 20 Qarargah or village strong points within the Panjsher. Each village had a platoon for defense and a platoon utilized as a part of a strike force for wider area operations. The strike force was organized into three mobile groups of 150 men, each consisting of three platoons of thirty men armed with AK-47s, Kalakovs, light machine guns, and RPG-7s. Each mobile group would also have a 50-man heavy weapons section equipped with mortars, artillery, heavy machine guns, and automatic grenade launchers. Command and control was executed by a small command element. Massoud also paid careful attention to establishing a local administration; creating a political, military, economic, law, and health section, and a ten man elected council to advise the commander. The Panjsher Valley as a whole was organized with Massoud as the commander, Abdul Hai as Deputy Commander, and departments such as military, economic, law, culture, information, political, health, intelligence, and Kabul affairs.[8] Massoud was the only resistance commander who followed up military victories with the establishment of local government infrastructure similar to Mao's efforts in China. By establishing this local infrastructure, the Soviets were forced to clear and hold the Panjsher with government troops. This was in contrast to other

[7] Roy, 14.
[8] Gall, 155.

areas of Afghanistan where the Soviets were able to conduct mobile operations without the establishment of permanent garrisons.[9]

Finally, Massoud organized an intelligence network, concentrating his recruitment in the Ministry of Defense, that provided him information on upcoming operations and casualty figures. This information allowed Massoud to determine which Soviet and government forces were susceptible to Mujihadeen attack and allowed him to conduct these attacks at a time and place of his choosing. As the Panjsher valley was not a self-sufficient region, Massoud was able to use Panjsheri who worked in Kabul as sources of information not only in the Ministry of defense, but also in a variety of other governmental organizations.[10]

The Tajik and Hazeras ethnic groups were the predominant inhabitants of the Panjsher. As such, Jamiat was the only faction operating in the valley, unlike many other areas where multiple factions operated and taxed the local populous. These taxes often caused resentment towards the Mujihadeen. In the Panjsher, however, the local populace was not taxed; revenue for the insurgency came from 25 gem mines in the region providing $8-9 million in annual revenue to Jamiat operations.[11]

Massoud's area of operations, the Panjsher Valley, was strategically important to both sides. Whoever controlled the Panjsher would control access into Kabul from the Soviet Union. The Panjsher sits astride the Salang Highway,

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[9] Diego Cordovez, and Selig S Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 60.
[10] Hassan M. Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response*. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 242.
[11] Kakar, 242.

which is the main line of communication between Kabul and the Soviet Union. Built by the Soviets, the Salang Highway is a 425 kilometer paved line of communication stretching from Shir Khan in northern Afghanistan to Kabul in the south. However, with over 40 bridges, rugged mountain terrain, adverse winter conditions, and the 2700-meter long Salang Pass, the Mujihadeen were able to conduct operations against military supply convoys that significantly degraded the Soviets ability to re-supply Kabul from the Soviet Union.[12]

In his study of the Soviet military experience in Afghanistan, Oliver Roy assessed the period between 1980-84 to be the "stagnant years" concerning Soviet counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan. Roy argued that the Soviets used their elite troops to control Kabul, but used their second rate conventional motorized rifle troops, most of whom were Muslim, in an ineffective effort to control the countryside.[13] While this is true, the real problem wasn't the ethnicity or quality of the troops. The real problem with these forces was that they were trained and equipped to conduct conventional mechanized, combined arms operations against NATO, not fight a counter-insurgency in the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. Massoud took great advantage of this policy and seized the entire Panjsher in the spring of 1980. Counterinsurgency operations against Massoud by the communist forces were ineffective. Motorized troops were extremely vulnerable to mines, RPGs, and ambush in the restrictive terrain of the Panjsher. Massoud was able to move his guerilla force into the high mountainous terrain should conventional Soviet forces gain a

[12]Anthony H. Cordesman, and Abraham R Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War. Volume III: The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*. (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992), 106.

tactical advantage. Once mobile forces left an area, lightly defended garrisons were left to counteract Massoud's permanent presence. Massoud's forces, however, easily captured these garrisons. Based on the success of his Panjsher operations, Massoud conducted one of the most daring operations of the war in the spring of 1981, by launching a raid against Bagram airbase and destroying numerous Soviet fixed and rotary wing aircraft.[14]

In December 1982, Massoud autonomously signed a controversial ceasefire agreement with the Soviets. He claimed that the Russians requested the ceasefire and that it was useful to both sides. It allowed Jamiat to replenish and resupply and allowed the Soviets to deploy their forces elsewhere after conducting 3 major operations in the Panjsher in two years.[15] Yet the implementation of an autonomous ceasefire was probably a mistake by Massoud. Without coordinating his efforts with the Pakistanis, who were the major sponsor of the insurgency, Massoud lost favor with the ISI and received less support from the U.S. and Pakistan than other Faction leaders, thereafter. The ceasefire also caused inter-Mujihadeen warfare with Gulhbudin Hekmatyar's Hezb-I-Islami faction; another of the seven Peshwar based resistance factions. Hezb saw Massoud as an agent of the Soviets after the ceasefire. Hekmatyar claimed that Jamiat was being supplied by the Soviets and that Massoud was taking over Hezb villages outside the Panjsher with Soviet acquiescence.[16] Massoud's action was also demoralizing to some of his own

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[13] Roy, 17.
[14] Cordovez, 70-71.
[15] Mike Martin, *Afghanistan: Inside a Rebel Stronghold*.(Poole Dorsett: Blandford press, 1984), 111-115.
[16] Martin, 198.

Mujihadeen, as they perceived the skirmishes with Hezb forces as being at the expense of the Jihad.[17]

Massoud negotiated the ceasefire with the Soviets because he was about to reach an operational culminating point and needed time to recruit, rearm, and retrain his forces. The Soviets conducted seven major operations against Massoud in the Panjsher, more large scale operations than against any other Mujihadeen commander. By implementing the ceasefire, Massoud was able to take the pressure off the Panjsher and its inhabitants, and allowed the Soviets to deal with other factions. A more cynical point of view would have Massoud already looking past the defeat of the Soviets and viewing the strength of his post insurgency rivals with concern. By signing a ceasefire with the Soviets, Massoud may have been looking to weaken his rivals militarily, while husbanding his own forces for the upcoming civil war.

In March 1984, Massoud refused to renew the ceasefire with the Soviets and reinitiated attacks along the Salang Road[18]. The Soviets, learning from previous mistakes in the Panjsher, utilized new tactics during their seventh offensive in the valley. High altitude bombers would strike the villages while armored and mechanized forces would attack along the valleys. As the Mujihadeen were forced into the higher elevations, Soviet Spetnatz and airborne forces would conduct heliborne assaults behind the Mujihadeen lines, effectively sealing their escape. While these tactics were much more effective than previous conventional Soviet operations, they were only successful in dispersing instead

[17] Martin, 217.
[18] Cordovez, 149.

of destroying the Mujihadeen in the Panjsher. Once the Soviets were forced to redeploy their elite troops and establish static garrisons in the Panjsher, Massoud was once again easily able to reassume control of the valley.[19]

Massoud continued to carry out a series of operational level offensives from 1985-87. Within a two-year period, his forces were able to seize a dozen strategic government bases to include the DRA divisional headquarters at Narin, Farkhar, and Koranomunjan.[20]

According to Sebastian Junger in his essay on Massoud, Massoud's greatest feat as a military organizer occurred in 1985 when he took 120 of his best Mujihadeen into the mountains for three months in a "train the trainer" type program. Upon completion, these 120 Mujihadeen were sent throughout the region with instructions to train 100 other Afghan men. This program provided Massoud a 12,000 man organization spread throughout the region with which he could conduct wide area operational level military operations.[21]

Massoud's success against the Soviets continued until their withdrawal in 1989. Unlike other military commanders fighting the Jihad who focused almost exclusively at the tactical level with the objective of killing individual soldiers and destroying equipment, Massoud was able to take a more operational and strategic view of the insurgency. He trained, equipped, and organized, the Panjsher in order to conduct tactical engagements within an operational framework. He understood the strategic value of the Salang highway and the strategic geography of the Panjsher valley in relation to that line of

[19] Cordovez, 149-50.
[20] Roy, 23.

communication. Finally, Massoud was able to conduct a series of campaigns in support of operational objectives that the other parties of the resistance were never able to match. Massoud would remain consistent in his leadership style and practice of the operational art throughout his military career and will be further analyzed in chapters three and four of this paper during a description of his struggle with various factions in the civil war and culminating later with the Taliban. Prior to these examinations, however, it is important to understand Massoud's difficult relationship with Pakistan because that relationship directly effected his leadership efforts against other warring factions and the Taliban as described later in this paper.

[21] Jurgen, 211.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTENTIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN

Massoud's relationship with Pakistan was troubled for a variety of reasons. He resisted Pakistan's control over his activities. This was because of Massoud's sense of independence and confidence. Massoud was also extremely popular within much of Afghanistan, especially amongst his fellow ethnic Tajiks. Pakistan viewed any Afghan public figure with grass roots support as a threat to its regional security policies, who required to be marginalized. Finally, Massoud's ethnicity as a Tajik made him suspect to the Pakistanis who viewed the Pushtuns to be key to the successful implementation of their regional security objectives.

Pakistan's foreign policy was influenced by three major factors; distrust of India, alliance with China, and pan-Arab unity in order to strengthen relationships with other Arab nations. The Soviet invasion also allowed Pakistan an opportunity to deal with the Pushtunistan issue.[22] Pakistan wanted to establish a geographic security belt in the Pushtun dominated region along the Afghan Pakistan border, which would incorporate the North West Free Province (NWFP) and provide a strategic buffer state against the Soviet Union.[23] Pakistan also harbored the strategic objective of establishing a Sunni Muslim belt in conjunction with a Pakistani dominated Afghanistan that would provide geographic and strategic depth to counteract India as a regional power. Control of the Afghan government in Kabul was central to accomplishing these

[22] Roy, 40.
[23] Roy, 40.

objectives and was to be accomplished via a three step sequential process of (1); forcing the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan by supporting the Mujihadeen, (2); dividing the guerillas enough to sufficiently weaken any Afghan nationalist movement that would be resistant to Pakistani influence, and (3); controlling the Afghan government in Kabul via a political party friendly to Pakistan.[24]

Pakistan considered Hekmatyar to be the Mujihadeen commander best able to implement Pakistani policy. He had been a refugee in Pakistan since 1974 and was a Pushtun, and was thus considered more reliable by the ISI than some factional commanders with a greater vested interest and popularity with the Afghan people. He had been sponsored by the ISI since fleeing into Pakistan, and had no real base of support inside Afghanistan. Because of this lack of grass roots support inside Afghanistan, he was perceived to be less of a nationalist threat to Pakistan's regional aims than some other commanders such as Massoud. While Pakistan did not completely ignore other factional commanders, they were given just enough support to maintain loyalty to Pakistan and were not central to Pakistani regional objectives.[25]

The concept of measured support ensured that the various factions were at least to a certain extent beholden to Pakistan and would undertake operations under ISI guidance. This policy also pitted the factions against each other in an attempt to curry favor with the Pakistanis. By dividing the factions in this manner, Pakistan was able to ensure that no strong, centralized Afghan

[24] Roy, 40.
[25] Roy, 40.

nationalist movement would be created as a counterpoise to Pakistan's regional security objectives.

U.S. support to the insurgency played directly into the ISI's hands. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) policy regarding support to the insurgency was extremely cautious and dominated by the need for plausible deniability. U.S. policy focused not on the future status of Afghanistan, but on embarrassing the Soviets and portraying them as communist aggressors. The U.S. saw the Afghan insurgency as a means of "returning the favor" for Soviet support to N. Vietnam during the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. The U.S. government's acquiescence to Pakistani desires to control distribution of weapons and other support to the factions effectively cut the United States out of the process of shaping the future government of Afghanistan. Pakistan was thus allowed to promote a domestically unpopular, militarily ineffective, anti-Western, fundamentalist leader in the form of Hekmatyar to national leadership. It wasn't until later in the conflict that the CIA realized the error in its programs and undertook alternate methods of supporting other factional commanders.

During the post insurgency civil war from 1989-96, Massoud sent emissaries to the United States in an attempt to negotiate an arrangement for direct support of the Northern Commander's Shura (NCS) without going through the ISI.[26] The NCS was a coalition of non-Pushtun factions and was a counterpoise to Pakistan and its surrogate Hekmatyar. Pakistan's previously discussed policy of predominantly supplying and supporting Hekmatyar during the war with the Soviets and during the current civil war strengthened Hezb-I-

Islami at the expense of the other field commanders who were constantly under Hezb attack. The myth that Hezb-I-Islami was the strongest most combat effective faction was a myth perpetrated by the ISI to convince the U.S. government that it's funding of the Afghan war was being properly invested. Massoud, who by most accounts was the most effective field commander, did not receive a single round of ammunition from 1988-90 from either Pakistan or the U.S. government because of this charade. Because of Massoud' renewed pressure, however, Washington modified its policy of blindly following the ISI position of all aid for the factions being distributed by Pakistan. Washington, in cooperation with Saudi Arabia, began to directly support various faction commanders of the NCS with increased supplies and financial support effectively counterbalancing Pakistan's support to Hekmatyar.[27]

In 1986, in a further display of his independence from Pakistani control, Massoud refused to participate in a Pakistani/U.S. plan to expand the Afghan insurgency into the Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in order to further destabilize the USSR. While Hekmatyar was willing to participate in the expansion of the war, Massoud was not. Showing exceptional insight, Massoud realized that the Soviets viewed the war in Afghanistan as an unpopular foreign war and that an expansion into the Soviet Union could ignite the passion of the people and strengthen their resolve.[28] The Soviet experience in World War II provides sufficient example of the tenacity of the Soviets when invaded. One cannot discount, however, any ethnic or possible nationalist

[26] Rubin, 120.
[27] Roy, 37.

concerns Massoud may have had regarding expansion of the war into his ethnic homeland of Tajikistan. His position on the issue, although astute and in the long term correct, further isolated him from Pakistan and the U.S..

Most Pakistani initiatives, post insurgency, in regard to the future government, were an attempt to implement its previously discussed regional security objectives. Particularly noteworthy are the June 1988 Shura to elect an Afghan Interim Government (AIG), and the February 1989 Shura to elect a permanent Afghan government. In the first, Shura membership was restricted to the seven Peshwar based Islamic groups, sponsored by Pakistan. The election, however was not representative of the will of the people as 87 percent of the displaced Afghan refugees in Pakistan wanted the return of King Zahir.[29] In the second Shura, although the membership was not exclusive to the seven Peshwar based factions; the Sunnis did control 420 of the 439 seats.[30] Both Shuras elected Pushtun leaders acceptable to Pakistan, and there can be no doubt that both these electoral bodies were significantly shaped by the ISI.

Probably the most blatant diplomatic meddling on Pakistan's part, however, was its role in framing the Islamabad/Jalalabad Accords. The inter-Mujihadeen violence of the Afghan civil war in the early 90's, and the subsequent instability these abuses caused, concerned Pakistan greatly. Because of the violence and instability in Afghanistan, Pakistan's Qazi Hussain Ahmad of Jamiat-I-Islami and Gen Hammeed Gul, the ex-chief of the ISI, proposed a

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[28] Rubin, 65.
[29] Kakar, 266.
[30] Kakar, 266.

set of accords designed to create a fundamentalist Afghan state. On 7 March 1993, the Islamabad Accords were signed. The Accords were an interim measure designed to effectively shorten Rabbani's term in office as outlined in the Peshwar Accords, insert Hekmatyar into a position of power as the Prime Minister, and to weaken Massoud's position as Defense Minister. The final details were to be worked out in a follow on agreement known as the Jalalabad Accords.[31]

The Jalalabad Accords were signed on 30 April 1993 and were designed to ratify the Islamabad Accords, form a Coalition governing body, implement a cease-fire and Ministry of Defense control over militia heavy weapons, as well as elect a new Defense Minister.

Pakistan's ulterior motive in the design of the accords, however, was to discredit Massoud and to bring Hekmatyar to power. Massoud knew he could not win an election for Defense Minister and to turnover his heavy weapons would effectively leave him defenseless. He resigned as Defense Minister and took his HQ and weapons to Jabalus Siraj in Parwan, north of Kabul. Massoud still maintained approximately 20,000 soldiers on the streets of Kabul, however, and Hekmatyar as the new Prime Minister refused to enter the city for fear of his personal safety.[32]

The Massoud/ Pakistan relationship was problematic throughout Massoud's career. From his perspective, he desired more support from the ISI, especially in the forms of additional weapons and funding, but was unwilling to

[31] Kakar, 284.
[32] Kakar, 285.

act as their surrogate. This was especially evident in his autonomous ceasefire with the Soviets, his unwillingness to expand the war into Tajikistan under U.S. and Pakistani guidance, and his running confrontation with Hekmatyar. Massoud was a nationalist and although he actively lobbied for support from a variety of countries to include the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Iran, he was unwilling to give them a dominant voice in the conduct of his military campaigns or in the future of Afghanistan. This was a clear source of tension between Massoud and Pakistan throughout his career.

These conditions were unacceptable to Pakistan. Pakistan's real and perceived security concerns as they related to India and the Soviet Union forced them to undertake a campaign to ensure the establishment and survival of a Quisling government of Pakistani sympathizers. The ISI realized early in the problem that Massoud was not their man, and although effective in fighting the Soviets, could never be allowed a dominant voice in the government. Pakistan's attempts to counter Massoud with the combined weight of the ISI's and CIA's support to Hekmatyar are a telling indication of the seriousness with which they viewed this threat. [33]

The bitterness Massoud felt towards Pakistan continued to mount even in the later years of his life. In 1998, Massoud sent a message to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in which he urged the United States to reengage in the

[33] In conducting research for this paper, information on Massoud was difficult to find. Any histories on the insurgency written by Pakistani officials such as The Bear Trap, either do not mention Massoud at all or are derogatory of his efforts. Even the otherwise excellent The Other Side of the Mountain, written with Marine Corps support, has no tactical vignettes regarding Massoud's operations. Once again, Pakistani control of access to Mujihadeen leaders has denied us the true story concerning the effectiveness and importance of Massoud's operations.

Afghan situation. He blamed Pakistan for the rise of the Taliban and claimed 28,000 Pakistani citizens, to include paramilitaries, were actively engaged in the Taliban regime.[34]

Pakistan's determination to marginalize or discredit Massoud continued even after the ISI's abandonment of Hekmatyar and support to the Taliban, as described in Chapter Four of this paper. ISI involvement in the Taliban /Al Queda assassination of Massoud cannot be discounted and with his death, Pakistan must have believed their regional security situation much improved. Massoud and Pakistan were truly strange bedfellows.

[34] Ahmad Shah Massoud, A Message to the People of the United States of America. <www.Afgha.com/article.php?sid=7747>

CHAPTER THREE

UNEASY ALLIANCES WITH OTHER AFGHAN FACTIONS

The diversity of the Afghan ethnic landscape is vast. During the insurgency with the Soviets and the subsequent civil war, eight major ethnic groups arrayed in seven major resistance factions with an additional indeterminate number of tribal and societal bonds attempted to defeat the Soviet army and subsequently form a national government. While the Afghans were successful in the first objective, they failed in the second. This is the situation Massoud faced in his attempt to mold and lead a representative national coalition; an attempt that would ultimately fail due to factional, ethnic, and tribal allegiances at the expense of the nations good. This Chapter will explore the different factions of the resistance, the newfound importance of ethnicity during the post insurgency/civil war period, the role of societal mores and the quest for power and how all these factors effectively fractured attempts to form a national government.

After the failure of the 1975 Islamic uprising against the Daoud government, the Islamic movement splintered into three parties due to a series of internal feuds. In order to better understand the political dynamic of Afghan culture and the challenges faced by Massoud, one must consider the different political parties of the resistance movement as developed during the war with the Soviets.

During the Soviet/Afghan war, there were seven parties on the Afghan political landscape; three were Islamist, three moderate, and one considered

fundamentalist. [35] The difference between the moderate and Islamic parties was based on the Islamist's advocacy for an Islamic revolution while the moderates desired a return to an older way of life based on Afghan culture. Both desired, however, a state governed under Shariat or Islamic law. The biggest contrast between the two was the moderate penchant for conservatism and nationalism while the Islamists desire an Islamic revolution, which the moderates strongly opposed.[36]

The Sunni Islamist movement was founded in the 1950s and opposed both the governments of King Zhia and President Daoud. It was an urban movement active at Kabul University that perceived Islam to be as much a political movement as a religion. Many of its members were expelled from Afghanistan in 1974 and were provided safe haven by the Bhutto government in Pakistan. While in Pakistan the movement split into three different factions because of internal feuding. These three parties were the Hezb-I- Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Hezb-I-Islami of Yunis Khales, which was mainly Pushtun, and the Jamiat-I-Islami of Rabbani, which was more moderate and consisted of mainly Tajiks and Uzbeks.[37]

Massoud joined the Jamiat-I-Islami faction led by Burhannudin Rabbani. Jamiat was a rural based faction of moderate Islamic scholars of varied ethnic backgrounds, but was heavily rooted amongst the Tajiks in the northeast of Afghanistan and other Persian speakers.[38]

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[35] Roy, 54.
[36] Roy, 54.
[37] Roy, 56.
[38] Rubin, 27.

Rabbani was born in 1940 in Faizabad the capital of Badakshan province. He received a B.A. in theology from Kabul University in 1963 and his M.A. in the same field in Cairo in 1968. After completing his studies, he taught at Kabul University and in 1972, he became the leader of the Jamiat-I-Islami faction.[39] Rabbani was considered a moderate pragmatist who wanted to expand Jamiat into a broad popular movement vice attempting a near term power play as some of his more radical rivals desired.[40]

Hekmatyar's Hezb-I-Islami faction was a much more radical element consisting of mainly rural secularly educated Pushtuns. [41] Hekmatyar was an important figure in the insurgency and Afghan politics. Born in 1947 in Konduz province, he attended Kabul University for two years and became involved in Afghan politics while a student. He became a member of the Muslim youth in 1970 and was later imprisoned in 1973 for the murder of a Maoist student. After the Daoud coup in 1973, he fled to Pakistan and in 1975 formed Hezb-I-Islami-e Afghanistan. Much like Massoud, he worked as a saboteur under Pakistani sponsorship against the Daoud regime. After the April 1978 coup, his faction became one of the main resistance forces against the government and Soviets.[42]

The third faction in the defunct Islamist Party was the Hezb-I-Islami party of Mullah Yunus Khalis. This party was mainly Pushtun in make up and

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[39] Rabbani bio data taken from the Afgha.com website. <url:www.afgha.com/glossaire-p-f.php?op=ImprDef&sid=73>
[40] Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion, and the New Order in Afghanistan*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30.
[41] Rubin, 27.
[42] Hekmatyar bio data taken from the Afgha.com website. <url:www.afgha.com/glossaire-p-f.php?op=ImprDef&sid=35>

exerted little more than a regional influence.[43] Khalis was a Pushtun from Nangarhar and educated in British India. He was yet another of the young Islamist who fled to Pakistan in 1974.

After the communist coup of 1978, three moderate parties were formed. They consisted of the Harakat-I-enqelab or Islamic Movement of Mohammed Nabi Mohammed, made up of Pushtuns and Uzbeks, Mahaz-I-melli or National Islamic Front of Afghanistan of Pir Ahmad Gaylani, and finally the smallest party Jabha-I nezhad-I melli or National Salvation Front of Sibgatullah Mojaddidi.[44]

The seventh and final party was the fundamentalist faction Ittihad-I-Islami of Abdur Rab Sayyaf. This faction was formed in 1982. It had no sociological or ethnic base and was a front organization for different Muslim brethren groups.[45]

This group of seven Sunni parties or factions formed a loose Seven Party Alliance in 1985 and constituted the majority of the Afghan Interim Government based in Peshawar.[46] These seven factions were at the center of the ideological battle between communism and Islam during the Soviet-Afghan war, but once the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989 the Jihad faded into a civil war based along ethnic lines - lines which Afghans ultimately identify themselves along.

If ethnic groups are based under linguistic criteria, the major ethnic groups in Afghanistan are the Pushtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Baluchis,

[43] Roy, 56.
[44] Roy, 57.
[45] Roy, 57.
[46] Roy, 57.

Nuristanis, Hazeras, and Shia. The civil war reshaped Afghan ethnicity along linguistic and religious lines (i.e. Sunni vs. Shia). Most Sunni Persian speakers, such as Massoud for example, saw themselves as Tajiks, opposed to Pushtun domination of Afghanistan.[47] Ethnicity does not tell the entire story of Afghan political dynamics, however. The role of societal mores must also be factored into the equation.

The national government in Afghanistan has never been able to truly control the countryside, due to societal divisions in Afghan society. These divisions, known as qawms, are based at the corporate, tribal, and ethnic levels.[48] This segmentation is extremely competitive and divisive in nature and makes Afghan politics a zero sum game.

Every Afghan belongs to a qawm. A qawm is a section of society bound by some sort of solidarity, such as an extended family, occupational group, a village, etc. A qawm is based on kinship and patron-client relationships and protects its members from the state, and other tribes or qawms. A qawm is a network, not a territorial unit, in which competition for leadership is common and continuous.[49]

Given the fall of the common Afghan enemy in the form of the Soviets, the reemergence of religion and ethnicity, and the role of the qawm in Afghan societal structure it is little wonder that Afghanistan has had such a fractious political history. With an ethnic base of only 14 percent it is easy to see how the dominant role ethnicity played made Massoud's bid for national power almost

[47] Roy, 6-7.
[48] Roy, 6.

impossible.

But ethnicity and societal mores only tell part of the story. While the foot soldiers and mid level commanders of the various factions were controlled by these two very important factors, warlords such as Massoud, Dostum, and Hekmatyar were controlled by much more base desires-the need for power. The following paragraphs describe the fighting and shifting allegiances of the Afghan civil war and highlight the fact that while the factions were predominantly ethnically or tribally based, factional leaders were much more pragmatic in forming alliances in a jihad of personal opportunity.[50]

In 1989, following the withdrawal of the Soviets, inter Mujihadeen violence intensified. Sayyed Jamal, an Islamic Party commander, killed 36 of Massoud's Jamiat Mujihadeen including seven of his top commanders. Jamal and three others were hanged for the crime. Many thought the orders for the murders came from Hekmatyar and the incident widened the schism between the factions and further weakened the AIG. At this point, Massoud's and Hekmatyar's differences had become irreconcilable.[51]

Due to a series of government reforms implemented by President Najibullah that angered hard core Khalqis, the Defense Minister General Shahnawaz Tanai staged a coup on 6 March 1990 that was crushed within 24 hours. Most surprising, however, was the fact Tanai was supported in the coup by Hekmatyar and his Hezb faction. Although at first glance Tanai and Hekmatyar did appear to be diametrically opposed to each other, they did share

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[49] Roy, 6.
[50] Kakar, 264.

some common ground. Hekmatyar was rumored to have links with the communists, shared a common ethnic background with the plotters (Ghilazy Pushtun), and was concerned that a political settlement would be centered on moderate factions and leaders at the expense of radicals such as himself and at the other extreme the communist Tanai.[52]

In late March 1992, President Najibullah cut funding to General Dostum's Uzbek militia, which had been used by the President as the government's storm troopers, and central to the government's success against the Mujihadeen from1989-92. Dostum rebelled and formed the Coalition of the North. The Deputy Defense Minister, General Mohammed Nabi Azimi, when sent to quash the rebellion, in an odd Afghan twist of fate-actually joined it. Massoud joined the newly formed Coalition of the North as well. The aim of the Coalition was to overthrow the Najibullah government and establish a new government consisting of Massoud as President, Mazari-a Shia as Prime Minister, and Dostum as Defense Minister. The Coalition drew support from many of the non-Pushtun factions such as the Shia, Hazaras, Tajiks, and Uzbeks. While personal gain cannot be discounted in Massoud's decision to join the Coalition of the North, Najibullah's nationalities policy which many groups felt oppressed the non-Pushtun populations is commonly cited as the main reason for the coalitions popularity.[53] Once again ethnicity was central to the formation of alliances in the post Soviet-Afghan war period, but the desire for power cannot be completely discounted when examining Massoud's decision either.

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[51] Kakar, 270.
[52] Roy, 29.

On 14 April 1992, Massoud halted his offensive against the Najibullah government on the outskirts of Kabul and called on the leaders of the different factions to come together and set up an Islamic government, further stating he desired no position for himself. [54] On the same date, however, Dostum's militia was airlifted into Kabul and took positions within the city under the pretext of defending it against Hekmatyar, who having been alienated by the Coalition of the North arrangement, was massing troops to the south of the city. UN Special Envoy Benan Sevan had been called in to defuse the situation, but proved unsuccessful. Najibullah attempted to escape with Sevan, but was stopped at the airport by the Uzbek militia and took refuge in the UN compound in Kabul.[55]

On 16 April, Massoud, already occupying Bagram and Charikar, moved into the northern part of Kabul. Massoud confiscated the vast majority of arms from the military installations in the city as the Parchamis felt most comfortable and safe turning their arms over to him. Four days later, Hekmatyar entered Kabul from the south and by 24 April, 20,000 Mujihadeen from a variety of factions were in Kabul.[56]

As cities and provinces fell from the Najibullah regime, different militias and factions, not the government took control. For example, Muhammed Nabi Mohammadi's Islamic Revolutionary Movement seized more capitals than any other group. In the west, Ismail Khan's forces acted as the de facto government, with Dostum filling a similar role in the north. To make matters worse, there

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[53] Kakar, 274.
[54] Kakar, 277.
[55] Kakar, 275.
[56] Marsden, 38.

were eleven different armed groups in Kabul alone. Massoud controlled the central part of the city, with Dostum in control around the airport, and Hekmatyar controlling the south. These groups were responsible for implementing the peace and supporting the government, but inter-factional fighting for the spoils of war was their true focus of effort.[57]

In 1992, Massoud's alliance with Dostum and his Uzbek militia began to disintegrate because of problems between Massoud's and Dostum's newly independent ethnic homelands of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Dostum's patron, President Karimov of Tajikistan, had reinstalled a communist coalition in Tajikistan with Dostum's assistance. Massoud, an ethnic Tajik, began to take in Islamist and Tajik nationalist refugees. Karimov directed Dostum to close the Tajik and Uzbek borders with Afghanistan, bringing him into direct contact with Massoud's forces. These clashes caused Dostum to break ranks with Massoud in the fall of 1993 and realign himself with Hekmatyar's forces.[58]

The fall of 1993 saw vicious fighting between the various militias. The Supervisory Council and Islamic Union fought Islamic Unity in Chindawal and Khusal Maina. Hekmatyar's Islamic Party fought Jamiat and the Supervisory Council, while Jamiat fought Dostum's Uzbek Jawjan militia. The factional commanders needed to be held responsible for the actions of their men, but instead they incited the fighting and stood by while the citizens of Kabul were raped, robbed, kidnapped, and killed. The biggest factor in the government's inability to deal with these excesses was the disintegration of the national army

[57] Kakar, 279-80.
[58] Rubin, 129-30.

and its inability to control the warring factions.[59]

In February 1993, the Shia group Hisb-e-Wahdat fought the Saudi backed Ittihad-I-Islami for control of west Kabul. Massoud's forces joined the fight on the side of Ittihad. The fighting took a heavy toll on the civilian populace with hundreds killed and reports of over 80 women sold into slavery. Massoud's alliance with Ittihad was unusual in that he backed the Pushtun dominated Ittihad over the more ethnically similar Hazeras backed Hisb-I-Wahdit. Massoud's move appears to have been an olive branch to the Afghan Pushtuns whom he felt had been disenfranchised by the Peshwar Accords.[60] The February 1993 fighting, and its alleged human rights abuses, probably did more to damage Massoud's reputation as a legitimate national leader than any other period. Although Massoud claims he neither ordered nor knew about these abuses[61], the responsibility ultimately rests with the commander. Throughout the civil war period all the major factional commanders, to include Dostum, Hekmatyar, and Massoud, completely abrogated their leadership responsibilities as commanders especially as those responsibilities related to human rights abuses. Reports of rape, looting, murder and slavery were commonplace during the civil war period and all the factions were responsible. Because of the excesses of his Mujihadeen, and the distaste these abuses caused both internal to Afghanistan, and internationally, Massoud could never be a legitimate national leader following the civil war period.

After stepping down as the Peshwar accords appointed Defense Minister,

[59] Kakar, 280.
[60] Marsden, 39.

Massoud attacked Hekmatyar's Islamic Party in November of 1993, in the Tageb Valley, 40 miles northeast of Kabul. Massoud's intent was to capture the Sarobi region, which linked Jalalabad and Kabul and provided hydroelectric power to the region. By capturing this region, Massoud would effectively cut Islamic Party lines of communications with Kabul. [62]

The Islamic Party had 4500 men in the region. Massoud commanded a smaller force, but was able to employ air support and destroyed Islamic party positions in Tageb, Sarobi, Lataband, and Laghman. The fighting was fierce with the Tageb changing hands ten times and over 800 killed and 1500 wounded between the two sides. Ultimately, however, Massoud was driven from the region.[63]

On 1 January 1994, Dostum's Uzbeks, with armor, artillery, and air support, advanced on the airport, media centers, and the presidential palace in Kabul. Rabbani, with the help of the Islamic Union launched a counterattack against Dostum and was able to retake portions of the airport. Hekmatyar's Islamic Party attacked into the central part of the city, but neither Dostum nor Hekmatyar was able to overthrow the government. Both sides launched air and rocket strikes against heavily populated Kabul during the fighting and civilian casualties were heavy. By 21 January, almost 10,000 people had been admitted to Kabul hospitals with 700 to 800 killed.[64]

Massoud would most certainly have had an extremely difficult time

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[61]Sebastian Junger, *Fire*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2001), 216.
[62] Kakar, 286.
[63] Kakar, 286.
[64] Kakar, 287.

leading Afghanistan with only a 14 percent ethnic base. A bigger problem for Massoud, or for any future leader of Afghanistan, however, will be the forging of long-term alliances and/or co-opting factions or warlords to participate in a democratic form of government.

Given the factors mentioned previously in this chapter, Afghan society was simply too fractious for Massoud, or anyone else, to build effective long term alliances. The lack of trust between the different warlords based on the inter-Mujihadeen warfare of the civil war and the Pakistani policy of pitting the factions against one another during the insurgency, ensured that the building of short term coalitions vice long term alliances, would be the best Massoud would be able to do. The zero sum nature of Afghan society also ensured no long term interest convergence between the various warlords. What was good for one would be at the expense of the others and was therefore unacceptable to those that perceived themselves disenfranchised. Finally, the only incentive that truly mattered to the other warlords was power. When Massoud as Defense Minister was unwilling and unable to provide such an unrealistic incentive to the other faction leaders, any coalition building was doomed to failure. This failure brought a new power on to the scene…the Taliban.

CHAPTER FOUR

MASSOUD AND THE TALIBAN

> The fighters were down by the river, getting ready to cross over, and we drove out there in the late afternoon to see them off. We parked our truck behind a mud wall, where it was out of sight, and then walked one by one down to the position. In an hour or so, it would be dark, and they'd go over. Some were loading up an old Soviet truck with crates of ammunition, and some were cleaning their rifles, and some were just standing in loose bunches behind the trees, where the enemy couldn't see them. They were wearing old snow parkas and blankets thrown over their shoulders, and some had old Soviet Army pants, and others didn't have any shoes. They drew themselves into an uneven line when we walked up, and they stood there with their Kalashnikovs and their RPGs cradled in their arms, smiling shyly.
>
> Across the floodplain, low, grassy hills turned purple as the sun sank behind them, and those were the hills these men were going to attack. They were fighting for Ahmad Shah Massoud — genius guerrilla leader, last hope of the shattered Afghan government — and all along those hills were trenches filled with Taliban soldiers. The Taliban had grown out of the madrasahs, or religious schools, that had sprung up in Pakistan during the Soviet invasion, and they had emerged in 1994 as Afghanistan sank into anarchy following the Soviet withdrawal. Armed and trained by Pakistan and driven by moral principles so extreme that many Muslims feel they can only be described as a perversion of Islam, the Taliban quickly overran most of the country and imposed their ironfisted version of koranic law. Adulterers faced stoning; women's rights became nonexistent. Only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates recognize their government as legitimate, but it is generally thought that the rest of the world will have to follow suit if the Taliban complete their takeover of the country. The only thing that still stands in their way are the last ditch defenses of Ahmad Shah Massoud.
>
> — *From* Fire *by Sebastian Junger*.

Masssoud's confrontation with the Taliban and Al Queda centered on his belief that both were the products of outside influences, and bad for the long term future of Afghanistan. This Chapter will discuss the rise of the Taliban, examine Massoud's campaigns against it, analyze the role of Al Queda, and finally analyze why Massoud was forced to retreat into the far north of the country in the face of his opposition.

The Taliban grew out of a turf battle between the ISI and the Interior

Ministry of the Bhutto regime of Pakistan. The ISI opposed the formation of the Taliban because of their long-term sponsorship of Hezb-I-Islami and belief that Hekmatyar was capable of overthrowing the Rabbani government. The assumption could be made as well that by discontinuing their support for Hezb, the operation would be perceived as a failure by the government and the ISI discredited.[65]

Bhutto wanted Major General Nasrullah Babar to try a parallel track to weaken the ISI control of Afghan affairs. One of the primary reasons for the rise of the Taliban, however, was economic in nature. Pakistan wanted to open trade routes into Central Asia and a destabilized Afghanistan made that impossible. In order to open these trade routes, Pakistan wanted the Taliban to open the airport at Kandahar, open the Kandahar to Herat highway, and reestablish banks and retail stores in Kandahar and Herat.[66]

General Babar realized that there was significant disillusionment within the Afghan refugee community concerning the inter Mujihadeen civil war in Afghanistan. The Pakistani Madrassas or religious schools were predominantly filled with Afghan refugees and provided General Babar a steady supply of fundamentalist warriors who, combined with some Pakistani and Arab cadres, comprised the Taliban. These students saw the Mujihadeen leadership as being sinful and their actions not in keeping with the spirit of Jihad.

The Taliban adopted a strategy focusing on the defection of local commanders in order to weaken the Mujihadeen warlords from within rather

[65] Aabha Dixit, "Soldiers of Islam: Origins, Idealogy, and Strategy of the Taliban", *IDSA*, (August 1997): 6.
[66] Rubin, 140.

than fighting set piece battles. This strategy was so successful that the Taliban captured 14 provinces in south and central Afghanistan with no real resistance. The early successes of the Taliban convinced the ISI that the Taliban was a more effective instrument of Pakistani foreign policy than their surrogate Hekmatyar whom they subsequently deserted. From this point forward the ISI took the lead within the Pakistani government for the training and operational oversight of the Taliban at an estimated cost of $ 70 million a month.

The Taliban's first victory was on the outskirts of Kandahar at the village of Doorhai. From there the Taliban moved against Spin Bolak and then towards Kabul. Of special significance was the fact that the Taliban's ranks went from 2,500 to 30,000 during this campaign. On 14 February 1995, the Taliban seized Hekmatyar's main base at Charasyab, in Logar province. Hekmatyar retreated into the mountains in Sarobi province without firing a shot, leaving his heavy weapons to the Taliban forces.[67]

By this time, Massoud once again controlled Kabul. As the Taliban moved into south Kabul, Massoud counterattacked, driving them out, but caused significant collateral damage in the process.[68] Massoud was able to hold the Taliban out of Kabul for over a year (1995-96) and pushed them back into Zabul and Hilmand provinces. Despite these successes, however, Massoud was forced to retreat from the city. The overwhelming desertions from his Pushtun militias, Dostum's refusal to switch sides in order to relieve pressure from the northwest, and the cutting of his lines of communications to Jalalabad all caused Massoud

[67] Rubin, 140.
[68] Rubin, 140.

to conduct a strategic withdrawal to the north of Kabul.

Massoud's strategic withdrawal from Kabul ensured the survival of his forces. He correctly perceived the Taliban to be militarily too strong at this point to engage in a conventional military campaign. Thus, falling back on Mao's dictums to fall back in the face of a stronger enemy Massoud withdrew and saved his forces. Massoud already was beginning to detect some weaknesses in the Taliban, however. He perceived their administration as being too brutal to the Afghan people and felt that the population would only abide the Taliban's excesses for so long. He also felt Pakistan, who had been funding different Afghan factions for over 20 years, would not be able to continue to support the Taliban indefinitely.[69] Massoud's strategy at this point was one of survival. As long as the Taliban didn't decisively defeat him he was winning. He felt Pakistani funding wouldn't last forever and the Taliban's brutality against its own people would ensure continued support for Massoud in the future.[70]

After his withdrawal, Massoud and Dostum joined forces and forged the Northern Alliance. Massoud gave the Taliban a severe defeat at the Salang tunnel in February 1997, but the Taliban's strategy of pay offs and bribes for subordinate commander's defections continued to hurt Massoud's operations. Dostum also lost most of his frontline commanders as well during this period. Most significantly, Dostum lost Abdul Malik for a reported 200 million dollars, causing Dostum's retreat from Mazar-I-Sharif back across the Uzbek border with only 135 of his men. The city, which had been largely untouched during 18

[69] Junger, 204-211.
[70] Junger, 204-211.

years of war, was taken by the Taliban who subsequently murdered thousands of civilians. [71]

The Northern Alliance was not finished, however. Massoud was able to coordinate a multi axis attack in June of 1997 that captured Pul-I-Khurmi, Jabal-us-Serang, the south end of the Salang Pass, and finally on 20 July, Bagram airbase and Charikar. The Taliban finally halted Massoud's advance 25 kilometers north of Kabul.[72]

In the summer of 2000, the Taliban almost finished off the Northern Alliance once and for all. 15,000 Taliban fighters launched an offensive against Massoud's forces with the intent of finally destroying the Northern Alliance in order to legitimize the Taliban administration. The Taliban forces were comprised of a mix of central Asian Mujihadeen, Arab fighters, and Pakistani regular army and special operations units. The Taliban offensive bypassed Massoud's traditional Panjsher valley stronghold and drove straight for the Tajikistan border to cut Massoud's strategic supply line. Massoud received the vast majority of his supplies from Russia, India, and Iran through a tenuous supply line that extended from Tajikistan, through the mountains, and finally to Massoud's base camps. The Taliban offensive successfully advanced east along the border until Massoud finally stopped their advance along the Kowkcheh River.[73]

Following this operation, the Northern Alliance's war against the Taliban

[71] Susan B. Glasser, "After 2 Decades, a warlord Keeps Up the Fight", *Washington Post*, 11 October 2001, A16.
[72] Marsden, 55.
[73] Junger, 204-211.

became a static war of position with the Alliance controlling about ten percent of the country north of Kabul. Massoud was unable to undertake large-scale offensive operations due to a lack of manpower, equipment and funding when compared to his adversary.

The role of Pakistan and Osama Bin Laden in supporting the Taliban and Al Queda cannot be overemphasized. Massoud, as a nationalist, must have viewed both the Taliban and Al Queda as outside negative influences on Afghanistan. Pakistani sponsorship of the Taliban and the Arab and central Asian make up of the Al Queda ensured there could never be any peaceful coexistence between Massoud and his adversaries.

Al Queda was integral to the Taliban's continued existence. The only military force capable of counterbalancing Massoud's forces was the Al Queda 055 brigade equipped with state of the art equipment and numbering somewhere between 500-2000 Arab fighters.[74] While the Taliban realized that an alliance with Bin Laden made them an international pariah, the Taliban leadership viewed Al Queda support as being central to their continued survival and thus the lesser of two evils. [75]

Massoud's popularity amongst the Afghan people may have begun to fade during the later stages of the civil war and this may have had some effect on his ability to carry out successful operations against the Taliban. The atrocities that the various factions committed during the civil war and the associated Muslim on Muslim inter-factional violence may have cost Massoud

[74]Michael Rubin,"The US Can Collapse the Taliban". *The Middle East Intelligence Bulletin. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. Sept 2001, 3.

the moral high ground when compared to the Taliban. Massoud's inability, as a member of the Rabbani government, to provide the people basic goods and services and his inability to wrest control of the countryside from the warlords may also have cost him a great deal of popularity and support.

Massoud's campaign against the Taliban was impressive, however. Realizing that he was significantly outnumbered and out resourced, he withdrew to his stronghold in northeastern Afghanistan and undertook a campaign more reminiscent of his Panjsher days against the Soviets than his more conventional campaigns of the Afghan civil war. In the face of overt Pakistani support to the Taliban and the significant pan-Arab manpower, equipment, and funding provided by Al Queda it was an amazing feat of arms that Massoud and his forces were not annihilated.

[75] Rubin, pg 3.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given Massoud's reputation as a tactician, strategist, and administrator both during the war with the Soviets and during the Northern Alliances campaign against the Taliban, why was Massoud a failure at the national leadership level? The answer lies in the two problem areas highlighted in the preceding chapters; the influence of Pakistan, and ethnicity and the Afghan societal structure.

Pakistan will be reticent to allow any administration to govern within Afghanistan that is not sympathetic to Pakistan's regional security objectives. Massoud, as an ethnic Tajik and Afghan nationalist, was never interested in Pakistan's regional security problems, and resented Pakistani interference in Afghan affairs. Massoud appeared to go out of his way at times to prove his independence of Pakistani control and in response Pakistani policy regarding Massoud evolved from one of marginalization during the Jihad to possibly in the end one of political assassination. There was never any common ground between Pakistan and Massoud, especially following the Jihad against the Soviets.

Massoud was also a victim of his own ethnicity, Afghan societal mores, and the thirst for power between the various factional leaders. As previously discussed, following the Jihad against the Soviets, ethnicity and a quest for personal power became the dominant themes during the Afghan civil war. It was a zero sum game and therefore what was good for Dostum's Uzbeks must be

bad for Hekmatyar and his Pushtuns and Massoud and his Tajiks and vice versa. The factional leaders were able to wrap themselves in the flag of ethnicity and qawm to hold their factions together, but there appears to be no mistaking the fact that the factional leadership was in the game for their own personal benefit. This pursuit of personal gain ensured that the compromise and respect for majority rule required to live under a democratic system of government would be unattainable for the Afghan people.

Given the two factors discussed above, the establishment of a smooth functioning representative government in Afghanistan may be impossible for any Afghan leader. For a military or political commander to exert lasting and impacting political influence across a geographic region whose borders were established by the territorial desires of a colonial power without any ethnic, religious, or tribal considerations is nearly impossible. Couple this with a western democratic system of government foreign to the societal beliefs of Afghan culture and the problem is compounded.

Based on an examination of Massoud as a military commander and the challenges he faced with Pakistan and the different Mujihadeen factions during his life, the following recommendations/observations are offered for future U.S. military commanders operating in the region.

The U.S. government must stay engaged in the Afghan process. The United States cannot be allowed to repeat its 1989 mistake of disengagement from the region upon the withdrawal of the Soviets. This disengagement undercut the legitimacy of the Rabbani/Massoud government and provided

neither a powerful arbitrator of Afghan political disputes nor a well resourced benefactor to assist in the provisioning of basic goods and services to the Afghan people. The 1989 U.S. abandonment of Afghanistan caused a power vacuum the Afghan resistance factions fought viciously to fill. This regional instability caused Pakistan to form and sponsor a movement in the form of the Taliban to counter this instability. The Taliban's radical fundamentalism allowed Al Queda a safe haven to train and plan for terrorist operations resulting in the September 11th attacks. There are many reasons not to stay engaged in Afghanistan. Our reluctance to conduct "nation building" operations, our aversion to casualties, and the long term fiscal costs are all valid concerns. Given the results of our last disengagement in the region, however, how can we afford not to stay?

The continued support of Pakistan as a military/political partner is vital to U.S. success. One of the main reasons for the Mujihadeen victory and the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 was the role of Pakistan. The Pakistani ISI provided funding, training, and safe haven to the resistance throughout the war. Pakistan must close down the border to Taliban and Al Queda movement as well as deny Islamic fundamentalist groups safe haven within its borders. Isolation, as seen in the British Malayan campaigns, is vital to any counterinsurgency effort. Pakistan must also ruthlessly cull rogue elements from within the ISI, as well as the military, that support fundamentalist agendas and groups.

The U.S. must also leverage the ISI's knowledge of the Taliban and Al Queda to most effectively prosecute this campaign. The ISI knows the players,

the tactics, the lines of communications, and the bases of operation. Full disclosure by Pakistan in these areas is vital to U.S. success.

Additionally, Pakistan must do something to regulate the educational curriculum within the madrassas, softening the prevalent radical fundamentalist doctrine with one in keeping with the more traditional teachings of Islam. The Pakistani madrassas are a breeding ground for terrorist organizations and they must be either shut down or the curriculum dramatically revised. Pakistan walks a fine line in this endeavor, however. While Pakistan must get the curriculum under control, they cannot be perceived as being insensitive to the fundamentalist without risking regime survival.

U.S. Forces must be sensitive to ethnic issues and understand the dynamics of Afghan culture and the history between the various factions. In the conduct of military operations, the U.S. needs to be cautious in regard to where the different Afghan elements will conduct operations. For example, in the conduct of Operation Anaconda, ethnic Uzbeks forces from the former Northern Alliance were brought into Paktia Province-an ethnically Pushtun area. This caused great animosity towards the U.S. and the Uzbeks and could possible re-ignite ethnically based military clashes similar to those seen in the civil wars of the 1990s. Whenever possible, local forces, under centralized government control should be utilized for military operations.

The factional leaders must be dealt with. Dostum and Khan are wildcards in the Afghan deck and must either be brought into the government as loyal government servants dedicated to the greater good, or they must be eliminated

from the political/military landscape. The central government in Kabul has historically been unable to effectively control the countryside. The warlords cannot be allowed to exert influence and authority over the people of Afghanistan if the government is to succeed. This issue is critical to the success or failure of the Karzai government. If the central government attempts to force the issue militarily with the warlords, it will re-ignite a civil war. The U.S. government will in the end probably offer Khan, Dostum and others, significant financial incentives to either join the government or leave the country.

The U.S. government must beware alliances of convenience. The Afghans are very comfortable with pragmatic alliances that are self-beneficial. Time and time again over the last 20 years, Afghan commanders have switched factions and fought for and against the Soviets, and for and against each other. For example, Dostum began his career as a General in the DRA in the Najibullah regime, supported Massoud in 1990, shifted allegiances to Hekmatyar in 1993, then to the Taliban in 1996, and finally back to Massoud in 2000. Prosperity and power are fundamental to continued alliances with the various ethnic groups, warlords and tribal communities.

Although Massoud failed in his bid for national leadership, there is still much to be admired about his life. He fought for his cause until the last day of his life, never leaving the fight for a comfortable life in the west. By all accounts (except those of Pakistan), he was the most effective, yet least supported of the major factional leaders. Finally, his leadership set the conditions for the success of the Northern Alliance and the United States against the Taliban and Al Queda

after the Sept 11th attacks.

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